

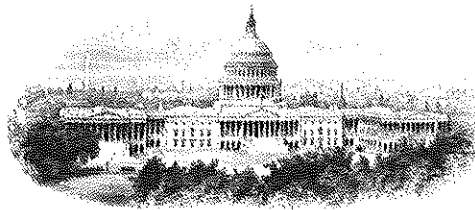
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3808

June 7, 2006

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
CAPITAL MARKETS, INSURANCE AND GOVERNMENT
SPONSORED ENTERPRISES
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SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE
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The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice and Commerce
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-309 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf:

I respectfully request that the Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice and Commerce increase funding for law enforcement efforts to combat child online exploitation. I am well aware of your strong support for these vital law enforcement programs and I know you share my concern about the safety of our Nation's children on the internet.

As you know, I introduced the Deleting Online Predators Act, H.R. 5319. This bill would amend the Communications Act of 1934 to require recipients of universal service support for schools and libraries to protect children from sexual predators on commercial social networking websites and chat rooms. H.R. 5319 would also require the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to create a website to be used as a resource for parents, teachers, school officials and others regarding the dangers on the Internet to child users and to issue consumer alerts to parents, teachers, school officials and others regarding the potential dangers of internet child predators and their ability to contact children. In addition, H.R. 5319 would direct the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to establish an advisory board to review and report commercial social networking sites and chat rooms that have been shown to allow sexual predators easy access to personal information of, and contact with, children.

Recently there have been several reports on the dangers that children face on popular internet social networking websites like MySpace.com. Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal has stated that "these websites are a sexual predator's dream and a parent's worst nightmare." These rapidly expanding internet websites allow users to communicate and provide information about themselves to other users. Although social networking sites have numerous useful applications, they are rapidly becoming a "virtual hunting ground" for sexual predators. Children's detailed personal information -- last name, address, phone number, school and schedule -- can be easily accessed by sexual predators. A Department of Justice Survey found that one in five children received an unwanted sexual solicitation over the internet in the past year. With more than 80 million registered users, media reports have reported that MySpace.com has removed 200,000 objectionable profiles

Last month, the Bucks County Courier Times reported a story about Shawn Little, 25, of Bristol Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, who was arrested and charged with 12 felony counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, three counts of unlawful contact with a minor and other crimes after he posed as a 14 year old on Myspace.com to lure a 14 year old boy for sex. Apparently, Mr. Little began messaging the teen on his Myspace.com account. That contact spread to instant messaging, then to phone calls and finally, a meeting where he "threatened to kill himself if he and the teen didn't have sex." According to the article, this is not an isolated event. This disturbing case follows a similar one in April where a 26 year old Bensalem resident utilized Myspace.com to arrange a sexual encounter with a 13 year old girl.

Recognizing that commercial networking sites and chat rooms represent a clear and present danger to millions of children outside the safety of parental supervision, I believe that a key component of protecting our children is to crack down on these on-line sex offenders. An increased investment in law enforcement will protect children and save lives.

In particular, I urge you to provide additional resources for the Internet Crimes Against Child Task Forces, U.S. Attorneys' prosecutors, and the FBI's Innocent Images program. This increase in law enforcement will hopefully lead to additional prosecutions of these terrible crimes before more children become victims.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue and thank you in advance for any additional investment that can be made to prevent on-line exploitation of children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Fitzpatrick", with a stylized flourish at the end.

MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress